

P-05-1029 Introduce mandatory testing of all passengers arriving at Cardiff Airport

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 1 Rhagfyr 2020
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Petition Number: P-05-1029

Petition title: Introduce mandatory testing of all passengers arriving at Cardiff Airport

Text of petition: Due to Coronavirus passengers are currently required to quarantine on arrival at Cardiff Airport from a list of European and International Countries. This has led to a decline in passenger numbers utilising the airport both outbound and inbound, a loss of revenue for airlines supporting our National airport, a loss of revenue for Cardiff Airport Ltd and a lack of confidence in the tourism industry due to passengers being required to quarantine on their return from identified countries.

1. Background

There have been repeated calls in recent months for people arriving at UK airports to be tested for coronavirus. UK arrivals need to self-isolate in the place they are staying for the first 14 days after their arrival, unless they have only visited an exempt country, territory or region.



The [Health Protection \(Coronavirus, International Travel\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2020](#) set out certain requirements for persons entering Wales to reduce the risk of imported infections. The guidance is applicable to anyone who arrives in Wales who has been outside of the Common Travel Area (UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) in the 14 days before arrival.

There is UK wide advice [safer air travel guidance for passengers](#) for those who live in Wales and have to travel overseas or for those visiting Wales.

Airport Testing

The [BBC reported](#) on 14 August 2020 that some countries, such as Iceland, offer travellers a choice on arrival if they have stayed in areas with high virus levels; anyone entering must either self-isolate for 14 days or get tested for coronavirus. In Germany, testing is compulsory at its airports for anyone arriving from a high-risk country.

The UK and Welsh Governments have been looking at introducing a 'test on arrival' policy but say there are logistical difficulties. There are also risks that testing will miss some cases of coronavirus.

The First Minister, Mark Drakeford MS told Members of the Senedd in [Plenary on Tuesday 15 September](#) that the Welsh Government is in discussions with Cardiff Airport to 'find a practical way' in which airport testing could be carried out. The First Minister said that the tests would not be mandatory, explaining that:

There are some practical issues that have to be addressed in that, in terms of the length of time that people may have to wait at an airport, how long people would be prepared to wait at an airport – you can't require people to do these things; it's a matter of voluntary participation. Therefore, you have to spend a bit of time to make sure that, if you are able to provide tests at an airport, you can do it in a way that is effective, and those discussions with the airport authorities here in Cardiff are continuing.

In [Plenary on 13 October 2020](#), the leader of the opposition Paul Davies MS questioned the First Minister on the progress that had been made in bringing in testing at the airport. The First Minister said discussions with managers at the airport were continuing; stating that the Welsh Government are "very close to agreeing it". He said;

When it is possible to have a system that does not lead to long, long delays, with people at the airport waiting for tests to be carried out—. He may think that that's easy to bring about. I can tell you, having read all of the information, that it's not. There are ways in which we can tackle that problem. We're very close to agreeing it. Once we do, we will make sure that people arriving in Cardiff Airport are able to be tested—and tested rapidly—so that where they are able to, they can resume their daily lives.

In October 2020, the UK Government's Transport Secretary Grant Shapps MP **announced** that a **Taskforce** was being established to look at a testing system for travellers to the UK. The taskforce has involved the devolved nations. **It is expected to report back to the Prime Minister in November 2020.**

In a speech to the Airport Operators Association on 9 November 2020, the UK Government's Transport Secretary Grant Shapps MP stated;

I want you to know that we've been making good progress on a 'test to release' programme to launch once we're out of lockdown. This will consist of a single test for arrivals into the UK, provided by the private sector and at the cost of the passenger. Allowing a much reduced period of self-isolation.

Beyond the lockdown, this should encourage many more people to book flights with confidence knowing there is an option that allows them to shorten self-isolation.

We have been working extensively with health experts and the private testing sector on the practicalities of the new regime. For example, making sure that it doesn't impact on NHS capacity.

We will report to the Prime Minister very soon, with recommendations how we can support the recovery of international tourism and travel and increase consumer confidence.

In addition to this arrivals regime, we are working with partner countries to consider self-isolation and testing options that could be performed before departure.

I know it's been confusing for passengers trying to understand different testing regimes for each nation.

So we are leading international work to develop a framework for international travel to provide global consistency. An accepted international standard if you like.

The type of lateral flow tests currently being trialled in Liverpool also give hope for optimism. This is a highly accurate swab test that gives results in less than an hour, and doesn't need to go to a lab. Ultimately, it could open the way for non-quarantined air travel.

The primary solution to the aviation crisis is getting passengers flying safely again. Ultimately, through the development of an effective vaccine. But before that, through effective testing. And we will consider all options that can help aviation recover safely.

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The Welsh Government **has not yet responded** to the Committee's letter.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.